

# Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

## Cuba Libre

Standard: I. Culture  
II. Time, Continuity, and Change  
III. People, Places, and Environments  
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions  
VI. Production, Distribution, and Consumption

Grade Level: 9–12 (analysis and evaluation)

Objectives: The student will:

- Explain the earlier situations in Cuba that led to the problems in 1898
- Discuss the emotions incited by yellow journalism and economic interests
- Read and share ideas about the growing situation with Spain over Cuba
- Write a letter describing the categorical decisions behind McKinley's War Message

Time: 2 class periods

Materials: Documents: **1897** *U.S. Diplomatic Note to Spain*  
**1898** *The De Lome Letter*  
**1898** *William McKinley's War Message*  
Access to Internet  
Textbook  
Maps of Cuba

Exercises: *The Fires of Insurrections*

Resources: *Pre-Lesson Literature Suggestions*

Procedures:

### *Setting the Stage*

For almost 30 years before President William McKinley would deliver his war message to Congress, insurrection burned on the island of Cuba. It will be necessary for students to learn whatever they can about this period in Cuba **prior** to starting this lesson. Cuba's revolutionary history has always been of interest to North Americans. We will begin to discuss "why?"

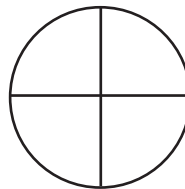
These early lessons related to Cuba will continue into the 20th and 21st centuries, so it will be necessary for students to keep adding to their knowledge and understanding of the Cuban story. A list of novels and literature of interest is included with this lesson.

*Pre Lesson:*

If possible, assign students to begin reading novels about Cuba, selected from the list. Also distribute the exercise, *The Fires of Insurrection*, for them to prepare as homework prior to the beginning of the lesson.

*Day One Procedures*

- 1.** Ask students to get out the exercise, *The Fires of Insurrection*, and conduct a full discussion on each of the questions presented. Try to include all the students and their findings. (30 minutes)
- 2.** Distribute the document: *United States Diplomatic Note to Spain* and ask students to read the document for the following points. (25 minutes)
  - a.** Make changes and/or additions to any of the points made during the discussion of the *Fires of Insurrection* exercise.
  - b.** Why did the United States tell Spain the island has been in a "state of siege?"
  - c.** What are the stated interests of the United States in the Cuban situation (p.2)?
  - d.** Why was peace in Cuba necessary to the welfare of the people of the United States?
- 3.** Students should then put notes from #2, a-d on their *Fires of Insurrection* sheet. When finished, have students turn to a neighbor and discuss what they think they have found in the document. (5-10 minutes)
- 4.** Now hold a full discussion with the class concerning the document and questions a-d. Ask the class how they think Spain is going to react to this document. Write their responses on the board for later use. (15 minutes)
- 5.** Now hand out the document, *The De Lome Letter*. Explain that it is a real letter that was intercepted and released in the newspapers. Have students draw a circle on a piece of paper and divide it into quadrants. As they read the letter, students should write down an emotion that they feel in each quadrant. Discuss these feelings along with why such a letter would anger the American public.



**6.** Look back at the list on the board of what will happen next. Is a surprise letter on the list? Discuss when in our history has a similar type of letter or other communication surfaced in the press and angered the public and led to demands for action?

**7.** If there is instructional time left, ask students to look up similar letters (as homework) and be ready to share during the next class period.

*Day Two:*

**1.** Ask students what other examples of leaked information they discovered that angered the American public and resulted in calls for action. *For example:* the Hutchinson Letters (1772), the Zimmerman Telegram (1917), the Pentagon Papers (1971), the Iran-Contra arms deal (1985), among others.

**2.** Discuss their findings and how the means of delivering the messages or intercepting the messages have changed.

**3.** Discuss the dilemma that presidents face when the public wants one course of action and the leadership of the country wants another. Check the list made yesterday to see if any clues can be found in that list.

**4.** Hand out the document, *William McKinley's War Message* and ask students to read quietly and make notes in the margins of anything they find that is similar to their discussions of the previous day.

**5.** After they finish reading, ask students these questions:

- a.** What measures did the U.S. Government take to resolve the problems in Cuba?
- b.** How did Spain respond?
- c.** What was the United States now demanding?
- d.** What grounds would be cited as justification for intervention?
- e.** Do you think the explosion of the *Maine* encouraged McKinley's action?
- f.** What reasons did McKinley give for the "fires of insurrection"?

**6.** As an exit ticket, ask the students to write a short letter to another student leaking the reason McKinley really wants to go to war and why he is requesting a decision as a "Christian peace-loving people" from the Congress. ■